



STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA

DENNIS DAUGAARD, GOVERNOR

June 20, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20034

Through: Doug Gore
Acting Regional Administrator
FEMA Region VIII
Denver Federal Center
PO Box 25267
Denver, CO 80225-0267

Dear Mr. President:

Under the provisions of Section 401 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5207 (Stafford Act), and implemented by 44 CFR § 206.36, I request that you declare a major disaster for the counties of Corson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Union, and Bennett to include the Pine Ridge Reservation within Bennett County as a result of a series of severe thunderstorms, ground saturation, flooding, and tornado events on May 24, 2013, through May 31, 2013. On June 18, 2013, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe located within Corson, Dewey, and Ziebach counties in South Dakota as well as Sioux county in North Dakota has also requested a major disaster declaration for this same event. Since Standing Rock Sioux tribal government is exercising their right to request a major disaster declaration, the State of South Dakota did not include their damage in this request; however, it should be recognized that both this disaster request and the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe's request should be viewed together to understand the full impact to the entire state.

The State of South Dakota experienced a very active weather system that took shape over the Northern Plains beginning May 24, 2013, and continued through May 31, 2013. Starting on May 24th, an upper level low pressure system over the Pacific Northwest remained nearly stationary for the next seven days. Each day, between May 24th and May 31st, this upper level low allowed the formation of surface based low pressure systems resulting in repeated rounds of severe thunderstorms and flash flooding throughout South Dakota. The placement of the upper level low in conjunction with the

surface low allowed for a continuous flow of warm, moist air to move into South Dakota, providing the necessary ingredients for episodic severe thunderstorm development.

These severe thunderstorms produced extreme heavy rainfall, flooding, and a tornado that caused roadways to be washed out and destroyed in four counties in South Dakota. The tornado of EF-1 magnitude struck the small community of Allen on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Bennett County on May 28, 2013, and destroyed three tribal homes and damaged seven other tribal homes as well as a church, which is the epicenter of community functions in this small tribal community. Several tribal members were injured as a result of the tornado and also were left homeless. The Red Cross responded and assisted the homeless tribal members to ensure they had a safe place to stay until permanent housing could be secured. Fortunately, there were no deaths as a result of the tornado. The severe thunderstorms producing heavy rainfall and subsequent flash flooding and ground saturation in the other four counties throughout the week long incident resulted in severely damaged public road infrastructure which caused an immediate threat to public health and safety due to debris on roads, rushing water over road surfaces, washed out roads, culverts, and inundated roads that made them impassable to emergency responders and citizens living in rural areas. In the hardest hit county of Lincoln, the City of Harrisburg received over 10 inches of rain in two days, inundating the town and causing numerous homes to have floodwater in their basements. Streets were flooded and the elementary school had water inundating the hallways and gymnasium. Water surrounded the elementary school, so the State responded and sent a high capacity water pump to move the water away from the school to lessen the impacts of the floodwaters and to make sure if additional rain fell it would not further increase the depth of water within the school building.

In response to these series of severe thunderstorms, flooding, ground saturation, and tornado events, and in accordance with federal law, I have taken appropriate action under state law and directed the execution of the State Emergency Operations Plan on May 31, 2013, and issued a State of Emergency to exist. Affected county and tribal government also have issued disaster declarations for their jurisdiction. The South Dakota Office of Emergency Management coordinated the following state agency resources to aid local and tribal governments in response to the storm:

- The South Dakota Office of Emergency Management worked directly with the affected local and tribal governments immediately following each of the severe storms and tornado to ensure all resource needs were taken care of. A 12 inch high capacity water pump was utilized by the City of Harrisburg in Lincoln County to move water away from an inundated elementary school to try to mitigate any

further damages caused by the floodwaters from the heavy rainfall over a two day time period.

- The South Dakota Department of Transportation cleared debris and barricaded inundated roads that caused an immediate threat to life, health and safety of the motoring public.

The following voluntary services were provided in response to the tornado in Allen on the Pine Ridge Reservation:

- The Red Cross assisted twenty-eight displaced tribal members with food, water, clothing and motel rooms.

On June 7, 2013, I requested from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) a joint federal, state, and local preliminary damage assessment of the impacted areas for public assistance damage. The preliminary damage assessment of public infrastructure for all five counties and one tribal government was conducted June 17, 2013, through June 19, 2013. The assessment confirmed five counties, including one tribal government, suffered severe impacts to public infrastructure.

The State is currently working with FEMA in response to a major disaster declaration declared on May 10, 2013, for a severe winter storm and snowstorm that affected seven counties and one tribal government. In fact, Lincoln County and the Pine Ridge Reservation were affected in both this disaster request and the prior major disaster declaration. No funding has yet flowed to either of these entities as a result of DR-4115-SD because the public assistance process is still being worked through with both entities. This disaster just exacerbates the recovery process. The Pine Ridge Reservation is one of the poorest reservations in the entire United States. Forty-nine percent of tribal residents live below the poverty line and there is an 80 to 85 percent unemployment rate, so they simply do not have the means for recovery without federal assistance. In the small town of Allen, with a population of 420 where the tornado struck, 96 percent of the population lives below the poverty line. Additionally, housing on the Reservation already does not meet the tribal members' needs; therefore, this disaster request is of the utmost necessity because three homes were destroyed and seven were damaged that causes even a greater strain on housing accommodations for the tribal government.

As I mentioned in my prior request for a major disaster declaration, DR-4115-SD, the State is still recovering from the devastating effects of a 2011 Missouri River flooding event as well as a record seven Presidential disaster declarations in 2010. The costs

associated with these numerous disasters compound and become quite heavy on small budgets like South Dakota and the local governments within South Dakota.

Total public assistance damages for the five counties, including one tribal government are estimated to be at \$1,430,470.00 for a statewide per capita impact of \$1.76. The statewide per capita impact of \$1.76 is above the most recent statewide per capita impact indicator of \$1.37, effective October 1, 2012. Counties incurred damages ranging from \$4.21 per capita in Bennett County which includes the Pine Ridge Reservation to a devastating \$51.70 per capita in Corson County.

Significant personnel and equipment on the state, tribal, county, and local levels have been dedicated to recovering from these severe thunderstorms, ground saturation, flooding, and tornado. I have further determined this series of severe thunderstorms, ground saturation, flooding, and tornado events is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and the affected local governments, and supplemental federal assistance is necessary. I do not anticipate any need for direct federal assistance at this time.

I respectfully request you declare a major disaster for the state of South Dakota as a result of these series of severe thunderstorms, ground saturation, flooding, and tornado events. I am specifically requesting Public Assistance for the following counties: Corson, Lawrence, Lincoln, Union, and Bennett to include the Pine Ridge Reservation within Bennett County. In addition, I anticipate the need for debris removal, which poses an immediate threat to lives, public health, and safety. Pursuant to Sections 403 and 407 of the Stafford Act, 42 U.S.C. §§ 5170b & 5173, the state agrees to indemnify and hold harmless the United States of America for any claims arising from the removal of debris or wreckage for this disaster.

On June 20, 2013, I issued an Executive Proclamation declaring a disaster in South Dakota. Preliminary estimates of the types and amount of assistance needed under the Stafford Act are detailed on Enclosure B.

I certify for this major disaster, state and local governments, and private-non-profit organizations will assume the applicable non-federal share of costs required by the Stafford Act.

I am also requesting the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program statewide. South Dakota has experienced great success in the past with mitigation. This incident presents us with another opportunity to mitigate future damages. The state is committed to mitigation projects which lessen the impacts of future disasters. This is evidenced by our approved

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standard Statewide Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan which prioritizes mitigation projects. The standard Statewide Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved on April 19, 2011.

I have designated Kristi Turman as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. She will work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide further information or justification on my behalf.

Again, Mr. President, I sincerely appreciate your consideration of my request and your willingness to assist South Dakota's citizens.

Sincerely,



Dennis Daugaard
Governor

cc: Senator Tim Johnson
Senator John Thune
Representative Kristi Noem

Enclosures

OMB No. 1660-0009/FEMA Form 010-0-13
Enclosure B: Estimated Stafford Act Requirements for Public Assistance